

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are currently pending in the application. By this amendment, claims 1, 5, 12 and 17 are amended for the Examiner's consideration. The above amendments do not add new matter to the application and are fully supported by the specification. For example, support for the amended claims is provided at Figures 1-4, and the description thereof. Reconsideration of the rejected claims in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Miscellaneous Matters

Applicants appreciate the consideration provided by the Examiner in reviewing the response dated July 5, 2005. The Examiner is of the opinion that the features relied upon in the arguments presented by Applicants are not recited in the claims, especially at page 11. Applicants respectfully note that the features presented at the second full paragraph of page 11 provide some of the advantages of the structure of the claimed invention, and are not meant as arguments which are presented in the claims. Instead, only those features which are specifically recited in the claims should be construed as limitations, and limitations of the specification should not be read into the claims, as correctly noted by the Examiner.

Entry of Amendment is Proper

Applicants request reconsideration of the rejections in view of the above amendments and following comments. Applicants submit that the above amendments should be entered since they do not raise any new issues that need further search and/or consideration. These amendments are provided to address objections to the claims and for clarification in view of the Examiner's comments. Applicants submit that the claims place the application in condition for allowance or, alternatively, in better form for appeal.

Examiner Interview

Applicants appreciate the courtesies extended by the Examiner to Applicants' representative during a personal interview conducted on December 15, 2005. During this interview, the differences between the applied art of record and that of the claimed invention were discussed. It was agreed that the amendments made herein to claims 1 and 12 appear to overcome the art of record and that the rejections should be withdrawn. Applicants also submit that claim 18, as previously presented, is also in condition for allowance.

Objection to Claim

Claim 17 was objected to for informalities. Claim 17 is amended in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion. Applicants respectfully request that the rejection over claim 17 be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

Claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) for being anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 5,947,233 to Kobayashi. Claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) for being anticipated by JP 56-129624. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As discussed during the interview of December 15, 2005, claims 1 and 12 have been amended for clarity. Claim 18 remains as previously presented, with no amendments. Applicants submit that these claims, in addition to the dependent claims, on their own merits or by virtue of depending from allowable base claims, are now allowed and that the rejections of claims 1-20 should be withdrawn.

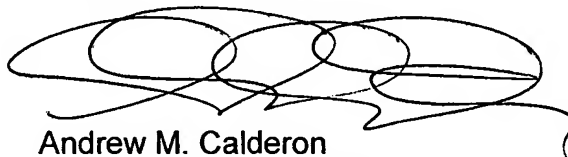
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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that all of the claims are patentably distinct from the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below, if needed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew M. Calderon', with a stylized, looping flourish extending from the end.

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